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Friday, March 25, 2005

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
United States Senate
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-1501

Dear Senator Grassley:

I am writing to ask you to do all in your power to prevent removing over \$1.2 billion from the Crime Victims Fund -- the nation's foremost means for supporting crucial services to the victims of crime.

The federal funds augment funds that come from the states. Last year in Iowa, \$1.6 million from the Crime Victims Fund was used to compensate nearly 5,000 victims of violent crime for their direct, out-of-pocket losses -- for example, medical costs of an assault not paid by a victim's insurance, or counseling costs for survivors of a murder victim. Last year in Iowa, an additional \$3.8 million from the Crime Victims Fund was used by 90 victim-service agencies all over the state to assist nearly 29,000 victims -- for example, providing shelter or support to victims of domestic violence, rape, or child abuse. About 90 percent of the Fund is used for such efforts in the states.

Support from the federal Crime Victims Fund is indispensable to providing assistance -- and justice -- to crime victims in Iowa and throughout the nation. Now the Fund is in serious jeopardy.

The Administration budget and the budget bill call for rescission of all amounts remaining in the Fund at the end of FY 2006, an estimated \$1.267 billion. That would leave the Fund with a zero-balance going into FY 2007.

I ask you to make every effort in the budget and appropriations process to prevent that rescission.

A brief review of the history of the Victims of Crime Act reveals why the rescission is so unwise. The Victims of Crime Act of 1984 ("VOCA") was enacted to provide Federal financial

support for services to victims of violent crime, primarily through grants to state crime victim-compensation and victim-assistance programs. VOCA created the Crime Victims Fund as a separate account into which are deposited monies collected from persons convicted of Federal criminal offenses, including criminal fines, forfeitures and special assessments. There are no general taxpayer-generated revenues deposited into the Fund.

Since its inception, the carryover balance in the Crime Victim Fund has been carried over to subsequent fiscal years, and used to ensure a stable and consistent source of federal funding to augment the limited state funds for crime victims. Since FY 2000, Congress has set a cap on annual Fund obligations expressly for the purpose of ensuring "that a stable level of funding will remain available for these programs in future years." (Conf. Rpt. 106-479, sec. 620.) The reserve, or "rainy-day" fund resulting from the cap has been used three times during the past six years to make up the difference between annual deposits, and distributions to the states and others.

It would be a major mistake to proceed with the \$1.2 billion rescission from the Crime Victims Fund – and a betrayal of our commitment to assisting the innocent victims of crime. It would make planning much more difficult for programs in Iowa and all over the nation, and it would drain reserves specifically set aside in case incoming monies fall short.

Most of all, it would say to crime victims: Your anguish, your suffering, and your needs are a low priority in Washington. If the Crime Victims Fund rescission remains in the final federal budget, victims of crime will suffer yet another indignity.

Again, I hope you will do all in your power to correct this situation as the process continues. If you or your staff would like any more information, my staff and I would be most eager to provide it. You can reach me at 515-281-5166, or Deputy Attorney General Doug Marek at 515-281-3349.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom". A horizontal line is drawn above the signature, starting from the left and ending under the "m".

Tom Miller
Attorney General of Iowa

cc: Iowa Office